

Tribal Behavioral Health Crisis Services: Volunteers of America Western Washington

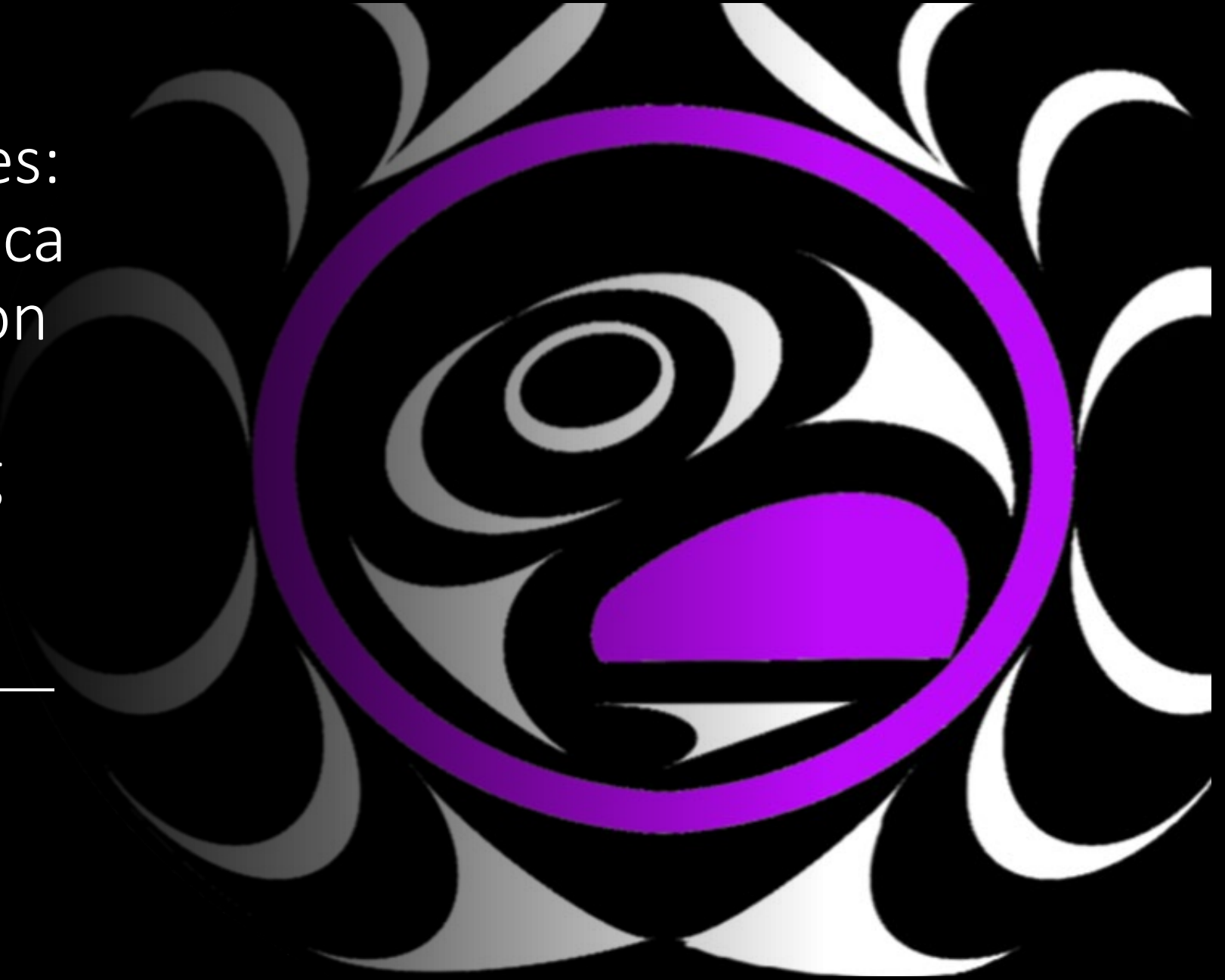
Native and Strong Lifeline

Natives Helping Natives

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And

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OUR GOALS TODAY

Overview of the Native and Strong Lifeline

Continuing care: After the crisis with the
Washington Indian Behavioral Health Hub

Questions and Comments





WHY WE NEED THE NATIVE AND STRONG LIFELINE

- Suicide disproportionately affects Native American and Alaskan Natives
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among AI/AN people aged 10 years-34 years. The highest rates are among the males between the ages of 24 and 34 and 15 and 24, (Simpson et al., 2020)

A photograph of a field of wildflowers, possibly milkweed, in the foreground. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong backlight effect and a hazy, golden atmosphere. The sky is a mix of light blue and white. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

WHAT CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES MEAN TO US

- We have been here since time immemorial
- We are and have always been, a very underserved population

WHAT IS THE NATIVE AND STRONG LIFELINE?

- The Native and Strong Lifeline is an American Indian/Alaskan Native specific suicide and crisis line.
- The NSLL will be operational 24/7, 365 days a year
- *NSLL calls are answered by other Natives*





WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE?

- Native Crisis Counselors-Hiring as many Natives as possible
- Performance metrics and time
- The lived experiences of our Native Crisis Counselors
- Native specific training module



ALL NATIVE STAFF: WHO AM I CALLING?

- The phones are operated by Native people
- Answer with their tribal affiliation This does not mean exclusively tribal members.
- Our NSLL counselors include enrolled tribal members, and descendants affiliated with their Native community or tribe



TIME AND PERFORMANCE METRICS

*Oh Great Spirit, help me
always to speak the truth
quietly, to listen with an open
mind when others speak, and
to remember the peace that
may be found in silence.” –
Cherokee Prayer*

A dreamcatcher with feathers and beads is visible in the background, set against a warm, golden sunset sky. The text is overlaid on this image.

LIVED AND SHARED EXPERIENCES: ITS MORE THAN PAPER

We place a high value on lived experiences

We recruit staff based on their lived experiences and desire to participate in
supporting our new culture of healing

Native Specific Training Module: Examples from our training

Communication Styles
Self Awareness
Self Care





Communication styles

- **Humor**- AI/AN people may convey truths or difficult messages through humor and might cover great pain with smiles or jokes. It is important to listen closely to humor as it may be seen as invasive to ask too much direct clarification about sensitive topics
- **Indirect communication** - It is often considered unacceptable for an AI/AN person to criticize another directly. This is important to understand, especially when youth are asked to speak out against someone else. Its considered disloyal or disrespectful to speak negatively about the other person
- **Storytelling**- Getting messages across through telling a story(traditional teachings and personal stories) is very common and sometimes in contrast with the “get to the point” frame of mind in non-AI/AN society - (SMA) 08-4354



Self awareness and etiquette

- Rapport and trust do not come easily in a limited amount of time. Allow them to create the space that is comfortable for them to tell their story. You may experience people expressing mistrust, frustration, or disappointment from other situations that are outside of your control. Learn not to take it personally.
SAMHSA. (2009, January).



Healing in two worlds


Be respectful of all beliefs and ways of being in the world. Being non-judgmental is a given but do the work of maintaining objectivity . You, as the crisis counselor, must reflect on your own biases and unpack your own history with trauma.

There is a good chance a part of your job will trigger painful feelings around trauma. Remember that we are all healing in two worlds together and remember that you're giving back. Giving is a part of traditional behavior . It is deeply ingrained in all of us.



HOW TO COPE WITH TRAUMA TRIGGERS

- **Learn to be present in your body**
Being present in your body can help you feel more grounded.
- **Learn to identify your emotions**
Knowing what you are feeling can help you put words to intense experiences.
- **Honor your needs**
Meeting basic needs can give you the energy to get through the hard moments. Self care is important.
- **Find balance in your day-to-day activities**
When you feel like your energy levels are too high or too low, it can be helpful to develop strategies to come back into balance.
- **Form healthy relationships with trusted people**
Healing from trauma by yourself can be difficult. Finding other people who are trustworthy to talk to about your struggles with can help you feel less alone.
- **Cope with things that remind you of the trauma**
Finding strategies to cope with things that remind you of the trauma can help you feel less on edge on a day-to-day basis.
- **Remember to be gentle with yourself**

A red string with several colorful fabric pouches (black, red, yellow, white, blue) hanging from a tree branch. The background is a blurred green forest scene.

Culture is medicine: healing through connection

- Regenerating cultural traditions & ceremonies
- Collective grieving and healing
- Knowledge/education is empowering-
understand the history and source of
trauma
- Reclamation
- Healing our nations starts with healing
ourselves
- Use strengths-focused perspective:
promote resilience

RECRUITING: ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

- Interview questions: What is the most important thing you have learned from an Elder?
- Scenario question: “Let’s say that a young teenaged client calls in and explains that she is upset because one of her uncle’s is “bothering” her. What would be your first thought on what she meant by that?
- Are you familiar with the barriers that Native communities have faced in the past and in the present day?
- What does historical trauma mean to you?





WHAT IS THE SAME?

- We will operate 24/7-365
- *In addition* to cultural competency training we do the traditional crisis counselor training
- Vision is to have the ability to dispatch tribal DCR's. We continue to work on MOU's with the 29 federally recognized tribes in Washington state.
- If a person is actively trying to harm themselves or others, just as Lifeline transfers callers to the crisis line, so will we



Challenges

Work force challenges

Gaining trust— are we real?

Opportunities

Promoting a culture of healing across

Indian Country

Bringing AI/AN mental health into

focus

Natives working together to make a

difference for ALL of us



WORKING TOGETHER

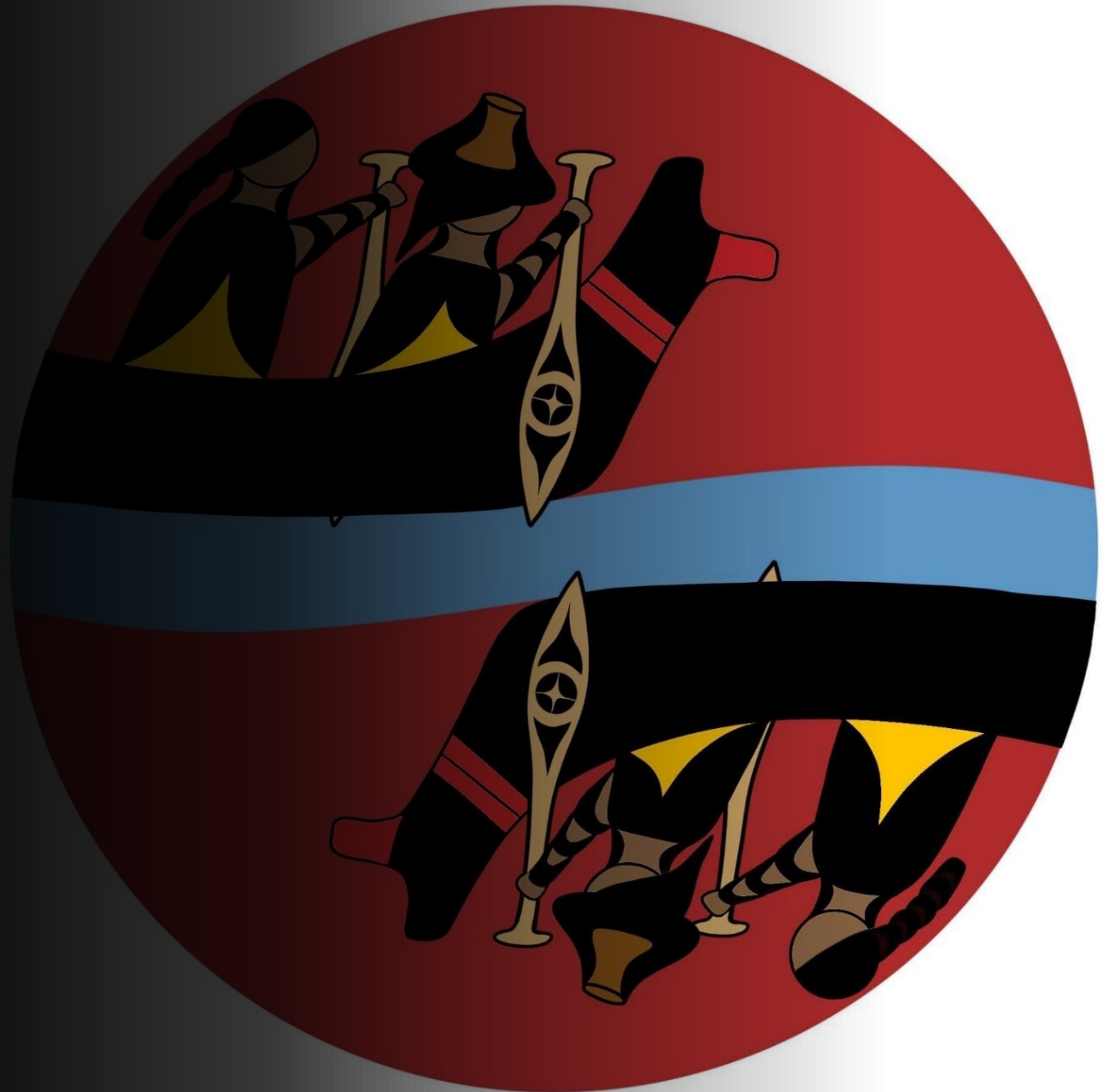
WASHINGTON INDIAN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH HUB

NATIVE AND STRONG LIFELINE



Continuum of Care: The Washington Indian Behavioral Health Hub

- Resources
- Culturally relevant options
- Assistance with discharge planning
- Coordination of care





Background

The HUB was developed in partnership with:

- Tribal Centric Behavioral Health Advisory Board
- American Indian Health Commission
- Volunteers of America Western Washington
- Health Care Authority and the Department of Health



OUR PURPOSE

To assist American Indian and Alaska Natives seeking care across both the Tribal and non-Tribal Systems.

To support Tribes and other Indian health care providers to provide access to behavioral health and crisis services

Washington Indian Behavioral Health Coordination Hub Duties:

- Track bed capacity
- Follow up on Lifeline referrals
- Coordinate care
- Provide Native specific resources
- Contact for Tribal DCR's
- Provide light case management
- Feedback from clients





CRISIS COORDINATION: HOW IT HAPPENS

Call the Hub at
1-866-491-1683

You will be connected with a Hub
Navigator

Explain which resources are needed
to your Navigator

Navigator locates resources from
our database

Pass this information along to the
caller

Follow up if allowed by the caller

ANSWERING THE CALL: REGIONAL HUB NAVIGATORS

Our home base is in Everett,
Washington

Each star indicates a region which
will have a Hub Navigator

This allows for our services to be
more far reaching

It also allows for resource
familiarity





Native Specific Needs and Resources

- Elders as a resource
- Cultural workers as a resource
- Regional support (Navigators)

Elders as a Resource

- Elders are a wealth of knowledge and can help to guide us
- We listen to our Elders and many of us have a need to learn from them
 - They want what is best for us all and want to pass on their knowledge





TAKE AWAYS

- The Native and Strong Lifeline goes live this summer
 - It is a 24/7 service
- In Washington, it will be accessible by dialing 988
- *The Hub is operating and ready to receive calls*
- It is a resource line for Native Americans
 - Both Tribal and Non-Tribal resources are provided



Acknowledgments

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